

DEFRA LAND USE PROJECT DEMONSTRATOR CASE STUDIES WORKSTREAM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Demonstrator Case Studies workstream was developed through discussions between Defra, Natural England, CLG and Foresight about the future of land use in England. The aim of the study was to provide some practical evidence from existing initiatives which would inform the Foresight Land Use Futures Project and policy development in Defra. The workstream gathered evidence from over 50 land use initiatives about the issues faced in trying to achieve multiple benefits from land. These issues were condensed into six key themes which became the focus of the case studies looking across rural, urban and peri-urban areas. The findings from the workstream have contributed to the evidence base of the Land Use Futures project as well as informing the futures thinking and the analysis phase of the project.

The 6 themes are as follows

- Multifunctional demands on land
- The complexity of policies governing multiple land uses
- Managing land where there is no obvious economic use
- Public perception about land
- Sharing of and access to land use data
- The application of an ecosystem approach

The main findings of the report

Whilst there were no unforeseen outcomes, the case studies have corroborated beliefs and anecdotal evidence about what makes things work well and what frustrated progress. The report has dispelled the myth that the solution is *always* about funding and brought home how critical people (collaboration and enthusiasm) are in making things happen on the ground.

The take home messages for future policy relate to managing uncertainty, as this can be a brake on land use change. So how can policy makers provide a long-term framework that reduces uncertainty and is not vulnerable to political changes? The role of future funding, both short-term (resources for developing projects) and long-term (maintenance and repair of green infrastructure) can help.

1. Policies – particularly on nature conservation, farming, forestry, water and green space - have been key drivers. Both regulation and incentives have significantly influenced decisions. Policies have been seen as opportunities rather than as constraints ; though the study by its nature did not look at instances where policies may have stopped initiatives from getting off the ground. Three particular policy incentives are apparent from this suite of case studies: payments to land managers for providing services; commercial incentives for water companies to meet water quality objectives; and mechanisms such as S106 agreements which require part of the profits from built development to be reinvested in providing community or environmental benefits.

2. Other than policies, key drivers include opportunity (the availability of sites and funding) and ambition (both organisational and individual), for example NGO ambitions to improve conditions for people and for wildlife.
3. The planning system is key to delivering projects in urban and peri-urban areas, where policies incorporated into local development frameworks are a significant driver. It is less significant in the rural projects reviewed, where land ownership was concentrated into a small number of hands and development pressures were generally absent.
4. Involving others - patterns of engagement with others vary widely: target groups range from immediate stakeholders to the wider community, and the nature of the engagement varies from informing, through consulting to co-opting people into the project. The aims and design of a project usually determine the nature of the engagement.
5. Involving the public - relatively little information about public perception was identified, and provided limited insight. Other studies focusing specifically on the issue may prove more reliable sources.
6. Collaboration- all projects operated through some form of partnership mechanism, ranging from genuine pooling of resources to less formal confederations. These have operated with a high degree of consensus and low level of conflict. Tensions between partners have been resolved, and conflict with other land users has been low-key and managed.
7. Although the projects provide a pool of experience and lessons learned, caution is needed about assuming models are readily transferable. The circumstances of each project are stronger determinants than any single one-size-fits-all approach
8. There is widespread awareness of the importance and value of delivering multiple benefits from a single project or piece of land, although there is less evidence that the ecosystems services approach has consciously been adopted.

The Demonstrator Case Studies workstream report looked at 7 case studies from across England which were selected to illustrate the key themes.

The report was written by Peter Cleasby, from the external panel of the In-House Policy Consultancy, with the fieldwork carried out between November 2008 and March 2009.

Working within a fixed budget and timescale meant that there were limits to the depth in which topics could be explored. The report provides accurate information and insights, and should be seen as an addition to the wider evidence base. Caution is therefore needed in extrapolating specific policy prescriptions.

Natural England and Defra

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